

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT  
SELECT BOARD SPECIAL MEETING  
Minutes of November 30, 2021**

- I. ROLL CALL.** Select Board Chair K. David Maxwell, Board members Julie H. Goodrich, Nathaniel Miller, Charles Morse (absent), and John Stevens (absent). Also present were Town Manager Jeff Schulz, Acting Clerk Kenneth McCann, Laurie Baroffio (Finance Director), and Sara Lique.

Chair Maxwell called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Participants had the option of attending the meeting either in person or remotely through Go-to-Meeting.

- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Those persons present were asked to rise and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The remote contingent also participated as much as possible.

- III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED):** None.

**IV. DISCUSSION**

- a. Stony Brook Bridge Repair Project Bids.** Four (4) bids for this project were received by last week's deadline (11/22/21) and the results were as follows: M.A. Bean Associates (\$379,000), CCS Constructors, Inc. (\$393,000), Daniels Construction (\$364,685), and Parent Construction, Inc. (\$443,000). At the last regular meeting (11/23/21), Manager Schulz recommended awarding the contract to the low bidder (Daniels Construction) but there had been some questions regarding the project's beginning and ending dates, the length of time the bridge would be closed during repairs, the possibility of installing a temporary bridge during repairs, etc. Since then, Manager Schulz has reached out to Daniels Construction and did not receive a start date other than spring 2022. He also needs to contact the subcontractor that will fabricate the pre-cast deck. Regarding the possibility of a temporary bridge, Manager Schulz said the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) does rent them at reasonable prices. The installation probably would require a state permit but that shouldn't be too difficult to obtain. He will look into this further when the project starting date has been confirmed. Manager Schulz said he and Highway Foreman Trent Tucker do not have any significant concerns with the Daniels Construction bid (or any of the other bids received). Board member Goodrich felt that the bridge closure would be a major problem to residents and businesses in the area. The low bidder, Daniels Construction, anticipates the closure to be between thirty (30) and forty-five (45) days, which is longer than other bidders estimated. Chair Maxwell thought Board members Morse and Stevens had their own questions about this project. Since neither is present tonight, perhaps it would be best to delay awarding the bid to the next regular meeting (12/14/21). Manager Schulz said there would be no problem with this provided the decision is made before the end of December.

**b. Proposed FY 2022/2023 Town Budget**

**1. Operations Budgets:**

**Manager's Office.** Manager Schulz said this budget is set at \$141,450, which is a 3.3% increase from the current fiscal year. He said that the bulk of this rise is due to an increase in employee salaries (5.7%) that follows provisions in the municipal employee union budget. The current draft budget had the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) set at 4.7% but Manager Schulz learned today that due to recent inflation, the regional COLA now is 5.7%. That would increase this particular wage adjustment to 6.7%. Manager Schulz added there have been some savings in this and other budgets due to lower municipal costs for employee health insurance.

**Town Clerk/Treasurer.** Manager Schulz said this budget is set at \$177,790, which is a 6.7% increase from the current fiscal year. As with the previous budget, most of this is due to wage adjustments. In addition, the health insurance cost will increase slightly due to an employee changing her family plan. He noted that this department will see lower administrative costs with savings of \$300.

**Board of Civil Authority.** This budget is set at \$800, which is a 10% increase. The bulk of this increase is due to expected higher postage costs related to the state primary and general elections in 2022.

**Accounting Department.** This budget is set at \$266,840, which is a 2.5% increase. Finance Director Laurie Baroffio said this department will see wage increases in keeping with those in other personnel budgets. There will be some savings in health insurance costs due to an employee changing to an individual plan. The Maintenance Contract budget will increase by 5%, which is standard for such outside agreements. Ms. Baroffio noted this department receives an "Accounting Fee" from Northfield utilities (water, sewer, and electric) for providing its services.

**Recreation Committee.** This budget is set at \$600, which is a 7.7% decrease. This was the result of decreasing the postage budget by \$50, which is more in line with recent actuals.

**Conservation Commission.** This budget is set at \$1,450, which is a 38.1% increase. Manager Schulz said the bulk of this was due to increasing the Tree Inoculation/Planting budget from \$400 to \$1,000. This expenditure is due to the probably imminent spread of the Emerald Ash Borer infestation to Northfield. These funds will be supplemented by grant funds, etc. Chair Maxwell asked if Conservation Commission Chair Deborah Zuaro has been contacted about this proposed budget. Manager Schulz confirmed he has spoken to her. Ms. Zuaro and the other commission members support the proposed budget.

2. **Future Meeting Schedule.** Chair Maxwell would now like to set the schedule for upcoming budget meetings. The next one is scheduled for Tuesday, December 7, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Room. The budgets to be discussed will be for the Northfield Fire Department, Police Department, and Ambulance Service. The next budget meeting will be on Thursday, December 9, 2021 at the same location and time. It will cover the following department budgets: Highway, Town Garage, Cemetery, Library/Historical Society Building, and Municipal Building. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, December 16, 2021 and would cover the following budgets: Pool, Energy Committee, Support Services, Planning/Zoning, Economic Development, and Board of Listers. Chair Maxwell said there may need to be an additional meeting or two in January 2022 if there remain any unresolved issues.

**V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED).** There was none.

**VI. ADJOURNMENT.** Motion by Board member Goodrich, seconded by Board member Miller, to adjourn. **Motion passed 3-0-0.**

The Board adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Kenneth L. McCann*

Kenneth L. McCann, Acting Clerk

An audio recording of this meeting is available in the Town Manager's Office.

These minutes were approved at the Select Board regular meeting of December 14, 2021.